



**NORTH  
AYRSHIRE  
MENTAL HEALTH  
ARTS FESTIVAL  
2025**

**SCOTTISH  
MENTAL HEALTH  
ARTS FESTIVAL**



# 2025 NORTH AYRSHIRE MENTAL HEALTH ARTS FESTIVAL



We are delighted to be running the third year of our North Ayrshire Mental Health Arts Festival and contributing to the larger programme delivered by The Mental Health Foundation - Scottish Mental Health Arts Festival (SMHAF) . This years theme is ‘Comfort and Disturb’ and is represented in many of the art forms taking part this year.

## 2025 PUBLIC EVENTS



This year we want to highlight all the amazing contributors to our festival and let you learn more about the amazing creative mental health and wellbeing work being undertaken across North Ayrshire !

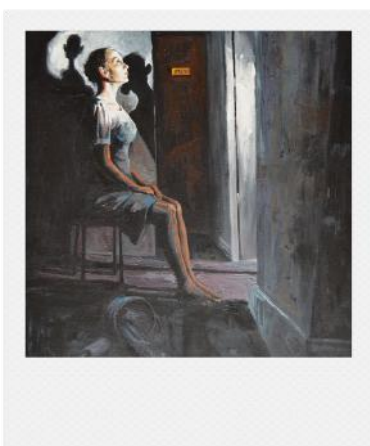
This year we had twenty one public events and a range of closed events and projects that have taken part. All providing unique ways to reflect lived experience and voice relating to mental health and wellbeing.

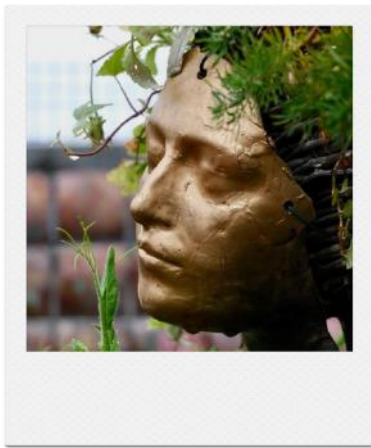


## Comfort

### THE SCOTTISH CENTRE FOR PERSONAL SAFETY ‘THE ART OF FEELING SAFE’ - EXHIBITION

The Scottish Centre for Personal Safety is a local charity that provides empowering, trauma informed personal safety training. During therapeutic art classes in their centre, artist Barbara Pokyrzyza supported students to use painting as a way of expressing feelings. By using art as a way of projecting these emotions onto canvas, the classes became a kind of therapy. We are delighted to be able to include this fantastic exhibition and community organisation in our festival this year





### **DALRY COMMUNITY GARDEN 'ART IN THE GARDEN'**

Dalry community garden is run by and for the community of the Garnock Valley and along with growing fresh fruit and veg they have regular events for the community to enjoy. This year, they created a range of art including a beautiful garden sculpture from upcycled materials to sit as a centre piece for anyone visiting. The work was captured by their photography club and exhibited for all to enjoy locally.



### **DRUM 4UR LIFE 'VILLAGE MUSIC CIRCLES FACILITATION WORKSHOP & BIG DRUM CIRCLE'**

Drum 4UR Life hosted the first ever Village Music Circles introduction to Drum circle facilitation workshop. Joined by Dr Jane Bentley and Ray Watters, internationally renowned trainers, offered a rare opportunity for hands on instruction. The workshop was followed by their annual Drum Circle in Ayrshire bringing people together from all ages to connect through rhythm, joy and community.



### **GRUVI BEATZ 'DRUM 'N' THE PARK' -MUSIC**

This was a relaxed outdoor gathering allowing people to explore rhythm based connection. It was an opportunity for people to come together and play without formal facilitation, allowing everyone to jam, share and learn from one another.



### **ROCK AND ROSE PROJECT 'ROOTS & REFLECTIONS: A FESTIVAL OF EXPRESSION'**

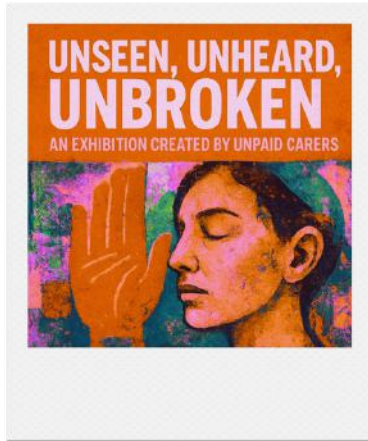
This session helped people set personal intentions & encouraged them to identify struggles, aspirations, manage daily challenges or bring new qualities to their lives. Through guided meditation & sound healing, participants were able to observe their thoughts and feelings from a new perspective. Guided by Kirsteen and local artist Tragic O'Hara participants were supported to express their inner journey through creative outlets such as drawing or writing.



## **'NHS Ayrshire & Arran Public Health Improvement Team 'Healthy & Happy' - WORKSHOP**



This workshop was aimed at supporting contributors to this year's festival and the wider public. It offered the opportunity for individuals to explore creative personal strategies to support mental wellbeing. The sessions encouraged people to explore new ways to boost mood, build resilience and find joy in daily life.



## **NORTH Ayrshire Carers Gateway 'Unseen, Unheard, Unbroken - Exhibition'**

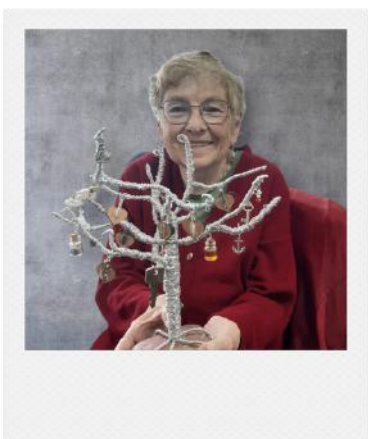


Created by unpaid carers, this was a moving exhibition developed over 6 weeks of community based workshops with artist Tragic O'Hara. Blending natural materials and street art techniques, the works offer honest, creative reflections of the realities of being an unpaid carer.



## **TRAGIC O'HARA 'A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO WALRUS CHASING' - SPOKEN WORD**

In 2019 Tragic O'Hara quit his job to become a Professional Walrus Chaser. In 2024 he was diagnosed with ADHD. Turns out Walrus Chasing was just a coping mechanism for surviving in the real world. This performance focussed on the seven things you need to do if you want to Chase your own Walrus. Tragic O'Hara has supported a number of events in this year's festival out with his own and we were delighted to be able to share some of his many community art projects!



## **STORY TREES - ONLINE ART EXHIBITION**

Students of North Ayrshire Wellbeing & Recovery College made wire tree sculptures, decorated with items to represent life memories they want to treasure. Students were able to let go of challenging memories and able to progress in their recovery. Each tree providing a unique and accompanying story.



### **RAW VOICES - PERFORMANCE**

Students of North Ayrshire Wellbeing & Recovery College shared their original poems and songs at this event. Finding your voice is a key focus of the Recovery College and the students worked with a singer songwriter, a performance poet and a drama facilitator to express their feelings, process trauma and build on creativity. Three songs were launched along with the music videos telling the stories behind the songs.



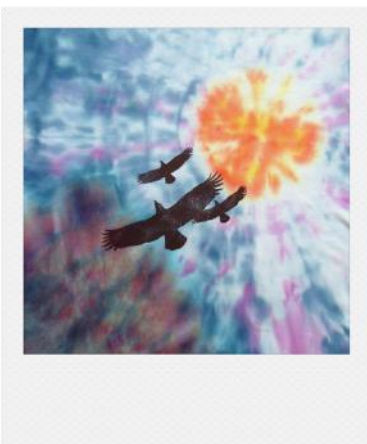
### **COMFORT BOX - WORKSHOP**

North Ayrshire Wellbeing & Recovery College provided a workshop to create and decorate a 'Comfort Box' to use to bring you comfort when you are experiencing anxiety or feeling overwhelmed. The workshop was facilitated by artist Laura Stevenson & encouraged creativity along with facilitating conversation around self-regulation.



### **POETRY FOR PEOPLE - WRITTEN WORD**

Poetry for people was a community arts engagement project creating poems to inspire, comfort and lift the spirits. Written by students of North Ayrshire Wellbeing & Recovery College, poems were shared in public spaces and at SMHAF events. Jenny Lindsay, performance poet, delivered poetry workshops to develop a plethora of poems to share with the unsuspecting public in unexpected places.



### **CREATING SPACE - EXHIBITION**

Artist Lucas Barr's exhibition showcases twenty years of work across drawing, painting, lino cut, and digital images. Inspired by nature, spirituality, and mythology, his art evolves into abstract shapes and compositions. Through his creations, Barr seeks to understand himself and the world, expressing his thoughts while crafting pieces he enjoys.



## **ART IMITATING LIFE' - A PRODUCTION BY JAY JAMES**

Part confession, part protest, 'Art Imitating Life' is a visceral verbatim theatre production born from lived experience. Drawing on the real stories of people navigating PTSD, agoraphobia, anxiety/panic disorders, depression and grief. At its heart it lies one patient, reeling after the sudden loss of a loved one - a loss so devastating it fractures the fragile stability they had managed to hold together.

## **CREATIVE CIRCLE - WORKSHOP**

Returning as a regular contributor to the festival, Molly from SeaHorse Book Store provided a creative circle event. This was aimed to be a safe space to share creativity, receive inspiration, express your voice and share your truth.

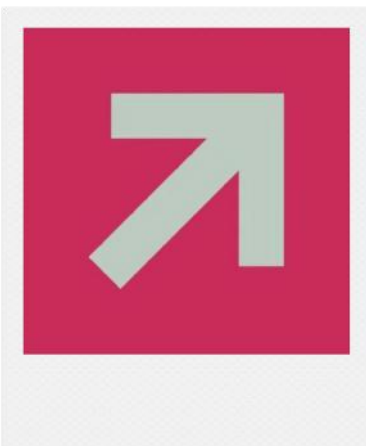


## **SO IN FLOW WITH MICROPOETRY - WORKSHOP**

So in Flow with Micro Poetry was a live 5-day online workshop that blended mindfulness & micro poetry in short segments of 10-15 minutes per day. The mini workshops held on Zoom were created to fit mindfulness into a coffee break so that mindfulness easily becomes a daily practice.

## **PROJECT PROGRESS - EXHIBITION**

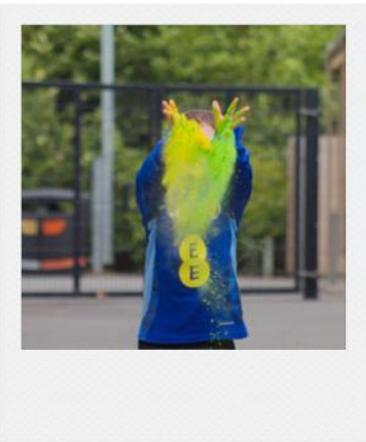
Returning again this year, Project Progress was an exhibition produced by young change makers who are forging a path for a more compassionate and inclusive society. This exhibition was designed to showcase the work young leaders are doing to help tackle the growing challenges of bigotry and discrimination in our communities and the negative impact this has on mental health. This exhibition throughout this year's festival, encourages people to be inspired, be challenged, but most of all be resolved to fight for change through engaging with their powerful display of creativity.





## **PAINT AND A PIE - COMMUNITY MURAL**

Led by the Garnock Valley Community Learning & Development team, Paint and a Pie involved a community mural and workshops run in partnership with Impact Arts. The project ran over 6 weeks during the summer, with a goal to create conversations around active citizenship, mental health and civic pride. The site identified had been derelict for years and the project aimed to create further conversation about starting a longer community renovation project hosting the mural at its heart. The project used the offer of pies to peak people's curiosity and participate in the workshops. The project has encouraged creativity, social connection, local storytelling, resulting in fantastic local art work for all to enjoy. Elements of the work were showcased and exhibited at the Harbour Arts Centre throughout the festival.



## **GENERATION UNFILTERED-EXHIBITION**

Over recent months, young people from Barnardo's engaged in a variety of creative art groups, exploring self-expression, wellbeing, and the world around them. In photography, they experimented with coloured powder, water, and lights to produce stunning images. Spray-painting sessions saw each person complete a canvas and collaborate on four large pieces now proudly displayed in their school. Summer art sessions offered space to relax, connect, and express through creativity. The Wellbeing Warriors brightened the local area with flowers and decorations, while the girls group explored techniques like jelly painting and mixed media. The primary group used sensory jars and expressive mask-making to explore emotions and the concept of hidden feelings. This collective work exhibited at the Harbourside Museum '**Generation Unfiltered**', represents the honest voices of young people expressing themselves through creativity.



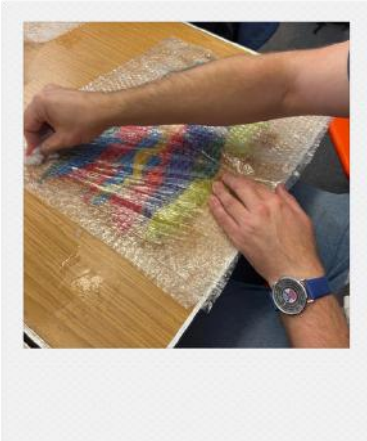
# COMMUNITY ART PROJECTS



In preparation for our festival this year we ran in person and online 'Creative Conversations'. The purpose of these were to encourage local groups and services to consider how they might get involved in our 2025 festival. To do this, local artist Lynne McNally supported us and provided instruction to attendees around the creation of a painted fabric bag. The activity encouraged everyone to get involved, fostered conversations, collaboration and connections resulting in many of the festival events included this year!



Lynne also provided five community workshops to local groups including Mecopp and members of the Gypsy Traveller community, the Cameo group and Yes, Your Entire Self. Lynne encouraged people to explore different techniques such as weaving, silk painted journals and felt making to create something that was special to them or reflected aspects that maintain or promoted their mental wellbeing. Some of the creative work produced was displayed at the Harbour Arts Centre or as part of the 2025 closing ceremony.



# COMMUNITY GROUPS & SERVICES USING THE CREATIVE ARTS ALL YEAR



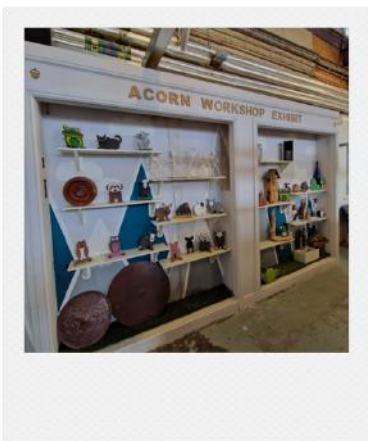
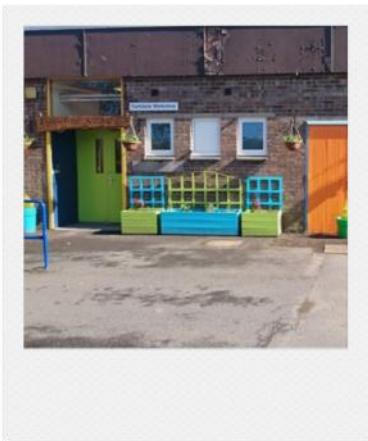
## **HARBOUR - BETTER DAYS - THEATRE PRODUCTION**

Better Days is a Harbour Story, directed by The Iris, Ayr. In April 2025, the Harbour team presented a raw and deeply moving production that takes you inside the realities of addiction and the incredible strength it takes to rebuild a life. Told by those who have walked the path, this hard hitting play shares inspirational stories of transformation, resilience and hope. From the depths of despair to the triumph of recovery, each scene is a testament to the power of community and second chances. Founded in 2022, Harbour provides essential local support to individuals and their families across Ayrshire who are recovering from addiction issues. Harbour are a great example of how creative arts can challenge stigma, empower and encourage essential conversations. We were delighted to show case 'Better Days' as part of our closing celebration and look forward to them being involved further in future years of the festival !



## **ACORN FURNITURE WORKSHOP & GARDENS - NHS AYRSHIRE & ARRAN - MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

Acorn furniture workshop and gardens is based at Ailsa Hospital in Ayr but receives referrals from both statutory and 3rd sector organisations from across all three Ayrshires. Acorn supports people on their recovery journey who have experienced past or ongoing mental health issues by creating opportunities to learn new skills, build confidence and independence and make connections with others. ACORN provides a range of courses throughout the year including woodwork, upholstery, picture framing and gardening as well as creative arts, peer training and mental health & wellbeing input. Over the festival period, ACORN provided a number of pop up events in Woodland View hospital to show case their fantastic work!



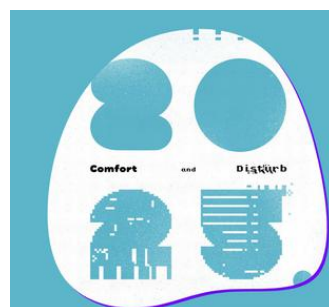


## IN PATIENT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Within inpatient mental health services the use of the creative arts is key to promoting wellbeing and recovery whilst in hospital. Nursing and Occupational Therapy staff along with visiting artists and organisations support individuals to participate in creative projects, some of which can be seen displayed in the gallery space in Woodland View Hospital corridor and within the Beehive. We look forward to providing more opportunities for collaboration with inpatient services over the coming years.

## CONTRIBUTER LINKS

- [Scottish Centre for Personal Safety](#)
- [Dalry Community Garden](#)
- [Drum4urlife](#)
- [North Ayrshires Carers Gateway](#)
- [Rock and Rose Project CIC](#)
- [Tragic O'Hara](#)
- [North Ayrshire Wellbeing and Recovery College](#)
- [Harbour Arts Centre](#)
- [Sea Horse Bookstore](#)
- [Leaders Unlocked](#)
- [Garnock Valley Virtual Community](#)
- [Barnardo's](#)
- [Harbour Ayrshire](#)
- [Acorn Furniture Workshop and Gardens](#)
- [Mecopp](#) - Community Art session
- [Impact Arts](#)
- [Saltcoats Link Up - Cameo Group](#) - Community Art session
- [Yes, Your Entire Self](#) - Community Art session
- [Ayrshire Film company](#)





# SUPPORT AND HELPLINE NUMBERS



## BREATHING SPACE

Need help now? Call free on **0800 83 85 87**

### Opening hours

**Weekdays:** Monday - Thursday 6pm to 2am

**Weekend:** Friday 6pm - Monday 6am



## SAMARITANS

Available 24 hours on **116 123**



## SHOUT NORTH AYRSHIRE

24/7 confidential support helpline

Text **SUPPORTNA** to **85258** for support



## MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AT NHS 24

NHS 24 mental health services are available to everyone in Scotland, of all ages. The services we offer include listening, offering advice, and guiding you to further help if required.



Phone **111** if you are:

- feeling distressed
- in a state of despair
- suicidal
- in need of emotional support

For an emergency ambulance phone 999.



# TO FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OUR FESTIVAL



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Or



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**<https://northayrshirementalhealthartsfestival.com/>**